



Committee Meeting Summary

Scientist Mentoring & Diversity Program for Biotechnology (SMDP Biotech)

Outreach & Planning Committee

Conference Call

Tuesday, November 4, 2025

9:00 AM Pacific / 11am Central / 12:00PM Eastern

The following Committee members were in attendance:

ICPD Staff: Dayveon Cooper, Bill Heath, Scott May, Dustelyn Savage, Elisabeth Valerio

Elizabeth Dam (AstraZeneca), Ellen Fredette (Amgen), Maria Alvim Gastón (Lilly), Lauren Celano (Propel Careers), Cynthia Cheatham (BIO), Marta Pineiro-Nunez, PhD, (Lilly), Charlene Rincón (Moderna), Brittany Witherspoon (Johnson & Johnson), Anna Zinger (Pfizer)

Welcome & introductions: BOLD ITEMS WILL BE COVERED DURING THE CALL

For a more in-depth briefing contact Scott May at smay@icpdprograms.org or +1 (202) 441-7370.

Scott May welcomed members to the final SMDP Biotech Outreach & Planning Committee meeting of 2025 and thanked them for their continued guidance and support. He reviewed how committee members could access the agenda through the ICPD website and explained that, as in previous meetings, the discussion would concentrate primarily on the items highlighted in bold. Members were encouraged to interrupt with questions, observations and recommendations as the meeting progressed. He reminded members that committee calls are recorded to support preparation of the official meeting minutes and showed participants where the meeting agenda and committee materials can be accessed through the ICPD website, icpdprograms.org, select "Committees" from the "Select an ICPD site" drop-down menu at the top right side of the page.

Participants introduced themselves and their organizations. Several members brought longstanding connections to SMDP, including former scholars and individuals who have mentored SMDP participants over many years. Scott noted that the committee would devote particular attention to mentors during this meeting, continuing a discussion begun in earlier calls about how partner companies recruit mentors, support their participation and strengthen the mentoring experience.

Planning for the 2026 SMDP Biotech Training Program

The committee reviewed preparations for the 2026 SMDP Biotech program, with the in-person training session scheduled for June 20–25 in San Diego. Discussion focused primarily on scholar recruitment and mentor engagement, with brief updates on venue planning and partner support.

Scholar Recruitment

Dustie Savage reported that applications for the 2026 SMDP programs were live and that ICPD was already receiving a strong early response. Recruitment activities included participation at professional and scientific society meetings as well as direct virtual outreach to prospective applicants.



She reported on ICPD's September 24-25 recruitment presence at NOBCCChE in Atlanta and noted that the team would next exhibit at ABRCMS in San Antonio from November 19-22. In addition, ICPD plans a virtual SMDP Informational Fireside Chat for December 5 at 11am. Pacific. The session will be open to prospective applicants across the United States and Puerto Rico and will provide an overview of SMDP, the application process and the mentoring experience.

Dustie also revisited a recommendation raised by mentors during the previous program cycle that ICPD provide mentors with feedback at the conclusion of the mentoring year. Under the proposed approach, scholars would be asked to reflect on their mentoring experience and appropriate feedback would then be shared with mentors. Dustie indicated that ICPD would explore implementing this for the 2025 cohorts where possible and incorporating it more systematically in future programs.

Mentor Recruitment, Attendance & Support

Scott opened a substantive committee discussion on mentor recruitment and, in particular, how partner companies can help ensure that selected mentors are able to attend the in-person training session. He asked members to share both successful practices and recurring challenges, recognizing that last-minute business demands can affect even highly committed executives.

Marta described Lilly's experience with a mentor who had been fully committed and had made travel arrangements but was forced to withdraw at the last minute because of an unexpected business obligation. Lilly was able to identify Carlos Corrales as a replacement, and the substitution ultimately worked well. The experience reinforced the value of maintaining a waitlist or backup pool of qualified mentors who are prepared to step in when unavoidable conflicts arise.

Marta explained that Lilly's 2026 mentor selection process would become more formal and competitive. Rather than relying primarily on direct outreach to selected individuals, the opportunity would be made available more broadly within the company in keeping with Lilly's wider mentoring frameworks. Prospective mentors would be expected to demonstrate commitment to mentoring and understand from the outset that attendance at the in-person SMDP training is a core expectation. Lilly was developing the rules of engagement and selection requirements with its internal office, with the intention of positioning SMDP mentoring as a high-profile professional opportunity.

Charlene Rincón shared Moderna's experience. Because the company had more interested individuals than available mentor slots during the previous cycle, she developed a set of questions to assess candidates, including their mentoring experience, motivation, passion for developing the next generation of scientists and ability to attend the training in person. Responses were then provided to the senior executive sponsor, who made the final selection. Charlene agreed that a competitive process could be valuable but noted that companies also need a fair way to evaluate candidates when interest exceeds the number of sponsored positions.

Elisabeth Valerio broadened the discussion to the continuing engagement of former SMDP mentors. She noted that one mentor who returned at short notice during the previous training session had



remained enthusiastic about SMDP but had not been aware of opportunities to re-engage. Because ICPD generally communicates with mentors as members of the broader network rather than managing each company's internal mentor recruitment, she asked whether partner companies could develop stronger mechanisms for keeping former mentors connected, inviting them to return, and potentially using experienced mentors to help orient incoming mentors.

Dustie asked whether companies were generally finding mentor recruitment more difficult. Elizabeth Dam described AstraZeneca's decision to position SMDP mentoring as an employee development and people-leadership opportunity. Employees considering future leadership roles are encouraged to view mentoring as practical experience in helping another person define and pursue career goals. Beth reported that this reframing had been successful and had broadened the pool of potential mentors.

The discussion also highlighted the effectiveness of mentors who are relatively early in their industry careers. Beth observed that some of AstraZeneca's strongest mentors have been within roughly five to ten years of completing their doctoral training and have only a few years of company experience. These employees often relate closely to scholars' transition from academia to industry and demonstrate strong commitment to the year-long relationship. By contrast, very senior leaders may be easier to engage for a focused one-hour seminar or executive discussion than for a full year of active mentoring.

Marta agreed that recruiting from the next generation of company leaders can both expand the mentor pool and create a meaningful development opportunity for employees who are genuinely interested in people leadership. The committee recognized that senior executives remain highly valuable to SMDP, but their participation may be best structured differently from the sustained one-on-one mentoring role.

Scott concluded that mentor recruitment, communication and support should remain a standing discussion item during 2026 committee meetings. Future discussions would examine not only how companies select mentors, but also how ICPD communicates with them, how former mentors remain engaged, and what level of support is most useful throughout the mentoring year.

Training Venue and Program Logistics

Scott reminded members that ICPD was seeking a partner-company site in the San Diego area to host the main 2026 training program. The anticipated group size was approximately 200 scholars and mentors, requiring space for the full day on Sunday, June 21, and from approximately 7am. to 1pm on Monday, June 22. He acknowledged that accommodating a group of this size is a significant request but encouraged companies with suitable facilities to explore the possibility of hosting.

The agenda also identified development of the training agenda and speakers, as well as planning for the Annual Celebration of SMDP Biotech reception, as continuing workstreams. These items were not discussed in depth during the call.



Partner Support & 2026 Sponsorship Planning

Scott advised committee members that he would contact each current partner during the following weeks to schedule an individual end-of-year debrief. These conversations would provide an opportunity to review each company's experience with the 2025 program, discuss improvements for 2026 and begin confirming how many scholar-mentor pairs each organization anticipated supporting.

Early confirmation of sponsorship levels was described as important to ICPD's planning for scholar recruitment, mentor matching and training logistics. The agenda noted that the 2026 sponsorship rate would be \$12,000 per scholar-mentor pair.

SMDP Alumni Program

Scott provided a brief but significant update on the continued development of the SMDP Alumni Program. Scott thanked Dayveon Cooper and Bill Heath for their leadership in building the program's governance structure. The SMDP Alumni Program Advisory Council was already established and includes alumni as well as ICPD representatives. Bill Heath chairs the Advisory Council, which is intended to meet periodically to provide strategic guidance. In parallel, ICPD was establishing an Alumni Steering Committee composed entirely of SMDP alumni so that alumni themselves could assume greater ownership of programming and community development.

Scott explained that the Steering Committee would include seven leadership positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Communications Lead, Regional Chapter and Development Lead, Finance Lead, Curriculum and Development Committee Lead, and Alumni Data and Technology Lead. Four positions had already been filled, and an election for the remaining three was scheduled to begin the following day. ICPD had received strong interest from alumni wishing to serve.

The intent is for the Steering Committee to meet more frequently, lead alumni activities and report into the broader Advisory Council. Scott characterized the response from alumni as highly encouraging and said the emerging structure represented an important step toward creating an alumni community that is increasingly led by its members.

There are also plans for a hybrid 2026 SMDP Alumni event in San Diego to be held on Saturday, June 20, culminating in an informal dinner, as well as the publication of SMDP Biotech and SMDP MedTech scholar alumni research reports. These agenda items were not discussed in detail during the meeting.

2025 SMDP Biotech & Virtual Programming

The agenda recorded that 99 scholars had been sponsored for the 2025 SMDP Biotech Program and that follow-up mentor meetings would be arranged as needed. Dustie reminded the committee that a reunion call for the 2024 cohort was scheduled for later that week.



SMDP Jobs Board

Dustie encouraged partner companies to use the SMDP Jobs Board to list internships, co-ops, summer opportunities and full-time positions. She reminded members that employment opportunities can be posted through the SMDP portal and emphasized the value of making current openings visible to both scholars and alumni.

Marta noted that Lilly had moved student opportunities to RippleMatch as its centralized point of entry and had already shared the relevant information with ICPD. Because Lilly could no longer accept individual referrals for these opportunities, candidates needed to register through that system before the company's early-December closing period. Dusty confirmed that ICPD would add the opportunity to the Jobs Board and also alert scholars directly through WhatsApp.

Scott suggested that a future committee meeting include a more focused review of the Jobs Board because current scholars and alumni have found it valuable. The broader virtual-programming agenda also referenced recruiter orientations, career networking, the SMDP app and interactive map, weekly email updates, Mentor Moments, Career Spotlights, project pages and the SMDP Gateway membership program; these items were not substantively discussed during this call.

Other ICPD Program Updates

SMDP MedTech

Scott informed members that dates had been set for the 2026 SMDP MedTech Training Session, which would be held October 16-21 in Boston.

Enterprise, Leaders & Innovators Society for Africa (ELISA)

Scott briefly described ELISA as ICPD's Africa-focused program supporting entrepreneurs across sectors. He noted that the program attracts significant interest from entrepreneurs working in healthcare and invited partner organizations interested in learning more or becoming involved to contact him. The 2026 ELISA Business Scholars Training Session and the Africa focused ELISA Business Summit are scheduled for March 19-22, 2026 in Hwange, Zimbabwe, near Victoria Falls.

Action Items

- ICPD to continue 2026 scholar recruitment, including ABRCMS outreach and the December 5 informational Fireside Chat.
- ICPD to develop a process for obtaining scholar feedback on the mentoring experience and sharing appropriate feedback with mentors.
- Partner companies to begin identifying 2026 mentors and consider backup or waitlist approaches for last-minute changes.
- Partner companies to consider mentor-selection practices that assess commitment, mentoring motivation and ability to attend the in-person training.
- ICPD and partner companies to continue examining how former mentors can remain engaged and help support incoming mentors.



- Companies with suitable San Diego facilities to contact ICPD regarding the possibility of hosting the June 21-22, 2026 training sessions.
- Scott May to schedule end-of-year debrief calls with partner companies and request anticipated 2026 scholar-mentor sponsorship levels.
- ICPD to complete the remaining Alumni Steering Committee election and continue development of the alumni governance structure.
- Partner companies to post internships, co-ops and employment opportunities to the SMDP Jobs Board and engage recruiters with the portal.
- ICPD to distribute the 2026 SMDP Biotech Outreach & Planning Committee meeting schedule in December.

This was the final SMDP Biotech Outreach & Planning Committee meeting of 2025. Calendar invitations for the five planned 2026 committee meetings will be distributed in December. In the interim, ICPD would continue individual conversations with partner companies as part of year-end debriefing and preparation for the 2026 program.

Upcoming SMDP Biotech O&P Committee calls:

Tuesday, February 3, 9-9:30 am PT

Tuesday, April 28, 9-9:30 am PT

Tuesday, July 28, 9-9:30 am PT